

Ongoing Manipulation of Scripture

The chief architect behind the manipulation of God's word is Satan (Gen. 3:1-4; Mt. 4:1-10). However, as foretold in prophecy, he has others assisting him in this work of deception,

He (symbolic beast representing the last kingdom under Satan's influence; cf. Dan. 7:23-24) shall speak pompous words against the Most High (Jude 10-16), shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change **times** (SHD 2166; set, or appointed times; used of holy times appointed by God) and law (SHD 1822; law of God; cf. Ezra 7:12, 21).... (Dan. 7:25a; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted; Ed. notes in parentheses).

The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken **the everlasting covenant** (Isa. 24:5; emphasis added).

The everlasting covenant mentioned in Isaiah 24:5 is based upon the simple principle of trusting and obeying God's word,

But he (Christ) answered and said, "it is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'" (Mt. 4:4; cf. Ps. 119:160; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Trusting and obeying God includes observing His appointed times. These were intended to be taught to all mankind through the ancient nation of Israel. Sadly, they failed in this responsibility,

Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: "**The feasts of the Lord**, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, **these are My feasts**" (Lev. 23:2; emphasis added).

Action was taken against God's appointed "day of rest", or Sabbath, by the council of Laodicea (363-364 CE) in their canon 29, which stated,

"Christians must not Judaize by resting on the Sabbath (Saturday in today's secular calendar), but must work on that day, rather honouring the Lord's Day (Sunday); and, if they can, resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be Judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ."

This is just one of many examples of the manipulation of God's word by Satan's servants, who present themselves as true servants of God,

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. ¹⁵ Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness (cf. Ps. 119:172), whose end will be according to their works (2Cor. 11:13-15; Ed. note in parenthesis).

The argument can be made that manipulations are sometimes done by those who are deceived, and therefore these people are not aware of the harm they are causing. However, Christ emphasized that anyone who misleads others is responsible for their actions,

Then he said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no stumbling blocks should come, but woe to him through whom they come! ² It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble (Lk. 17:1-2).

Also, Christ singled out those who are in positions of authority over others because they are under even closer scrutiny and accountability,

...For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more (Lk. 12:48b).

Therefore, any leader who manipulates scripture will have to give account to God in a future judgment for everything he taught to those under his influence,

But I (Christ) say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. ³⁷ For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned (Mt. 12:36-37; Ed. note in parenthesis).

With this scriptural principle in mind, Roman Catholic Pope Francis decided to approve changes to the wording of Matthew 6:13. By doing this, he has continued the council of Laodicea process of misrepresenting God's word. In a newspaper article entitled "Pope tweaks temptation phrase in Lord's Prayer" (USA Today; June 7, 2019), the following commentary was made,

Instead of saying, "lead us not into temptation," Catholics will say, "Do not let us fall into temptation," The Guardian (British newspaper) and Fox News reported. The pope said he thought the English translation of the prayer was not correct. "It is not a good translation because it speaks of a God who induces temptation," he told Italy's TV2000 channel in 2017, per The Guardian. "I am the one who falls. It's not him pushing me into temptation to then see how I have fallen. A father doesn't do that; a father helps you get up immediately. It's Satan who leads us into temptation, that's his department."

This confirms that Pope Francis does not understand the will of God correctly on a number of levels. These will now be examined. To begin with, both the Hebrew and Greek words translated into the English word "temptation" are similar, and they mean "testing", "proving", or "trial,"

Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of trial (Lit. testing; SHD 4531) in the wilderness, ⁹ When your fathers tested me; they proved me, though they saw my work (Ps. 95:8-9; Ed. notes in parenthesis).

And do not lead (SGD 1533; bring) us into temptation (SGD 3986; trial, proving, discipline through adversity), but deliver us from the evil one (Mt. 6:13; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Jesus Christ made the case plainly when he was dealing with the shortcomings, and/or sins, of various groups mentioned in the book of Revelation. Specifically, if they repented, they would be spared any corrective actions that might include experiencing various trials,

Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come quickly and remove your lampstand from its place – unless you repent (Rev. 2:4-5).

But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality (Rev. 2:14). Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth (Rev. 14:16).

Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and beguile my servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat things sacrificed to idols (Rev. 2:20). Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and **those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation**, unless they repent of their deeds (Rev. 2:22; emphasis added).

...for I have not found your works perfect before God. ³Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you (Rev. 3:2b-3).

So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold or hot, I will spew you out of my mouth (Rev. 3:16). **As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten** (discipline). Therefore be zealous and repent (Rev. 3:19; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Christ pointed out that Satan is given permission to bring trials upon people. The goal of this action is to lead people to see their sins and shortcomings,

Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer, Indeed, **the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested**, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful (trust and obey God's word) until death, and I will give you the crown of life (everlasting) (Rev. 2:10; cf. Mt. 10:22; 24:13; Mk. 13:13; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

For the purpose of further refinement/improvement, Satan was allowed to put Job through various trials,

Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" ⁹ So Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? ¹⁰ Have you not made a hedge around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But now, stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse you to your face!" ¹² So the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person." Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord (Job. 1:8-12).

Scripture is clear that God does not tempt anyone to commit evil (Jas. 1:13), but that does not preclude God allowing people to experience various tests, trials and tribulations,

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith (trust in God's word, followed by obedience to it) produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing (Jas. 1:2-4; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³ but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy (1Pet. 4:12-13).

Although Job experienced severe trials for a period of time, God helped him get through them all. Afterward, Job was blessed exceedingly (Job 42:12-17),

No temptation (trial, proving, discipline through adversity) has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted (tested) beyond what you are able, but with the temptation (testing) will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it (1Cor. 10:13; Ed. notes in parentheses).

In addition to God strengthening His people through various trials and adversities, He will protect them from any future worldwide tribulations, as He has done in the past with servants such as Noah and Lot (2Pet. 2:5-7),

Because you have kept the word of My patience, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth (Rev. 3:10).

Therefore the prayer “outline” in Matthew 6:9-13, that was never intended to be repeated over and over again (*verbatim*; cf. Mt. 6:7), included a request by the petitioner that God correct them without severe trials being necessary to bring about the necessary change in their behavior,

O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your anger, nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure (Ps. 6:1).

For Your arrows pierce me deeply, and Your hand presses me down. ³ There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger, **nor is there any health in my bones because of my sin** (Ps. 38:2-3; emphasis added).

In many cases, God allows people to go through trials in order to see themselves for the sinners they really are. The apostle Paul is a case in point because he lost his eyesight in order to emphasize the severity of his persecutions against many early church members (Ac. 9:1-18). Therefore, the prayer “outline” in Matthew 6:13 was meant to teach true servants of God to ask for His help to make changes in their conduct so they conform to His will. Otherwise, as Paul noted, we can be delivered to Satan for the purpose of refinement, leading eventually to repentance of sin,

For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged as though I were present, concerning him who has done this deed (1Cor. 5:1-2). ⁴ In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁵ **deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord** (second resurrection; cf. Rev. 20:5-6) (1Cor. 5:3-5; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Unfortunately, it is often those who think they “do not need a physician” that are actually in a condition of “spiritual bankruptcy”, and Christ admonishes them to ask for help, even if that leads to fiery trials as a necessary part of their spiritual growth,

Because you say, “I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing” - and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked - ¹⁸ I counsel you to **buy from me gold refined in the fire**, that you may be rich (spiritually speaking); and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see (God’s truth accurately). ¹⁹ **As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten** (discipline). **Therefore be zealous and repent** (Rev. 3:17-19; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

So it should be apparent that Pope Francis did not consider, or understand, that God indeed allows people to go through trials, and in some cases they can be severe. And that is the real context of what Christ was teaching in his discourse on Matthew 6:9-13. However, if we are mindful of this fact, we can ask God to help us make the necessary changes in our life in order to avoid the painful experiences associated with “learning lessons the hard way.”

Pope Francis, along with every scribe and scholar who has manipulated scripture, will have to give account for their actions that have contributed to misinformation about God's truth (Eccl. 12:14; Rom. 14:12; Heb. 4:13, 13:17).